

Honoring our Heritage

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

In 2000, the State of Washington formally recognized the month of May as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and encouraged public institutions, including public schools, to recognize and celebrate the contributions of Asian Pacific Americans in our state and nation.

Honoring Asian American and Pacific Islander State Employees

In honor of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, the Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs recognizes the contributions of our Asian

American and Pacific Islander state employees. We also applaud the work of all our employees in state government during these hard times.

State Demographics

Over 674,573 Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders reside in Washington State. Our state has the fastest growing Asian American and Pacific Islander population out of the states constituting over 47 ethnic groups rich in their own cultural traditions, languages and histories. They enhance cultural diversity and greatly contribute to the social,

political and economic makeup of Washington State.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders make up 6% of our state workforce.

Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs

The Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs is committed to cultivating and nurturing relationships among Asian American and Pacific Islander

communities and the state government as well as strengthening relationships between ethnic communities. The Commission responds to the needs of the community

by working with the Governor, the state legislature, state agencies, the private sector, and the community on issues of concern to bring about positive change and long-term solutions. The Commission informs the community about legislation, policies and programs that affect their well-being.

The Commission has an advisory board made up of 12 Governor-appointed commissioners representing the state's rich diversity.

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month is a time to recognize and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Asian Pacific Americans and their contributions to our state's economic, social, and democratic institutions.

- Governor Chris Gregoire



How do you define diversity?

I DEFINE DIVERSITY AS BEING INCLUDED, ACCEPTED AND RESPECTED REGARDLESS OF ONE'S UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES.



CHARLES

NAME: CHARLES P. LEBLANC

Position: Lieutenant

Agency: Washington State Patrol

Years at Agency: 23

Ethnic Background: Hawaiian, Chinese and French

Education: Completing Bachelor's Degree in Education

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

The most impactful and defining moment for me while working for the Washington State Patrol was responding to Ground Zero in New York as part of a WSP Peer Support Team. Even though the circumstances were tragic and horrific, our small team of six peer supporters were able to spend a week in New York to provide much needed emotional support and counseling for our fellow brothers and sisters who were directly impacted by terrorist acts.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

An AAPI leader that I look up to and respect greatly is Mr. Ken Niumatalolo, current head coach of the US Naval Academy Football Team. Not because he has the most wins of any Navy head coach in history, but because of his character and leadership ability, the core of who he is and what he stands for. Because he believes in doing the right thing both on and off the field no matter what the circumstances, and he instills this in his players with the expectation that they pass along the leadership torch to others through their individual and collective examples.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

Workforce diversity continues to be a very important challenge for AAPIs in today's government. No matter if you are in an entry level position or at the top of your organization, it is incumbent upon AAPIs to develop strong leadership and make personal commitments to diversity throughout government.

How do you define diversity?

I SEE ALL HUMANS AS ONE, AND THEN I SEE THE VALUE THAT EVERYONE'S VARYING BACKGROUND BRINGS FORTH TO HELP US ALL BECOME BETTER.



DENISE

NAME: DENISE MATAYOSHI MINO

Position: Information Technology Training and Project Management

Agency: Department of Health

Years at Agency: 15

Ethnic Background: Japanese American

Education: College

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

I enjoy the opportunities I've had to share my culture with my co-workers. Once we had a cultural event and I was asked to teach hula to the staff. We had the Secretary of Health in a lava lava dancing the hula in the front row! It was great!

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

In the 3rd grade, we had to write a famous person that we admired. I chose to write to Senator Daniel Inouye. I felt a connection to him because he was a Hawaii-born Japanese American, just like me. And, I had Uncles that had served in WWII in the 442nd, the same combat team as Sen. Inouye. I still look up to him today. As an adult, I'm able to articulate that connection and the sense of pride that I felt. His success was a success for all Japanese Americans, including me.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

As a third generation, Japanese American, I have different challenges than others that may be first or second generation. One issue I feel we face is having the courage to be ourselves, however, WE define who we are. We will always be evolving and as long as we show kindness, love, and encouragement for one another, we will continue to move ahead and make progress to overcome the challenges we face.

How do you define diversity?

TRUE DIVERSITY IS WHEN DIFFERENT ETHNIC COMMUNITIES, CULTURES, RELIGIONS, POLITICAL BELIEFS CAN RESPECTFULLY AND PEACEFULLY CO-EXIST IN A COMMUNITY OR WORKPLACE. WHEN THAT RESPECT IS NOT FELT OR GIVEN TO ANOTHER - IT CAN SUBTLY OR BLATANTLY BREAK INTO DISCRIMINATION, ANGER, RETALIATION OR WORSE.



BRIAN

NAME: BRIAN LOCK

Position: Assistant Director

Agency: Office of Financial Management/ Commission for National and Community Service

Years at Agency: 18

Ethnic Background: Chinese American

Education: BA, Western Washington University; MPA, Syracuse University

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

There are many, but being a former Political Science and Public Administration major and getting hired by the then Commission on Asian Affairs during a down economy in 1990 was memorable, as was helping write the first AmeriCorps grant for the State of Washington. Gary Locke also being elected Governor was not only memorable because he is a relative, but also it meant an AAPI broke the ultimate glass ceiling for any Washington State employee.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

It is hard to name just one AAPI leader I look up to and it is probably impossible since I've been shaped and influenced by so many when I first started my career. I can think of Bob Santos, Ron Chew, Gary Locke, Ruth Woo, Kip Tokuda, Al Sugiyama, Frankie Irigon, the late Rocky Kim, Sharon Santos, and David Della to name a few – all because they showed that the AAPI community and government can collaborate to bring about real change.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

Apathy. When I first started in state government, the Asian State Employees group was always pushing to break the glass ceiling for all AAPIs in Washington, and to help those get into elected office, managerial and administrative positions, Governor's cabinet level appointments, commissioner appointments, and so on. This was done through leadership development opportunities, guest speakers, mentoring new state employees and so on. Groups like Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Asian Community Leadership Foundation and Executive Development Institute are trying to do formalized training, but there does not seem to be the momentum there once was.

How do you define diversity?

THAT EACH PERSON SEES THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN EVERY PART OF OUR SOCIETY. IN LEADERSHIP, GOVERNMENT, MEDIA, LAW ENFORCEMENT, EDUCATION, SCIENCE, BUSINESS, ART...



MILLIE

NAME: MILLIE PIAZZA

Position: Environmental Justice Coordinator

Agency: Department of Ecology

Years at Agency: 6

Ethnic Background: Taiwanese/Sicilian American

Education: Ph.D, University of Michigan, School of Natural Resources & Environment; M.E.S, Evergreen State College in Environmental Studies; BA, Sociology, Whitman College

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

Every moment working with communities. And being at Ecology, an agency with a commitment to environmental justice.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

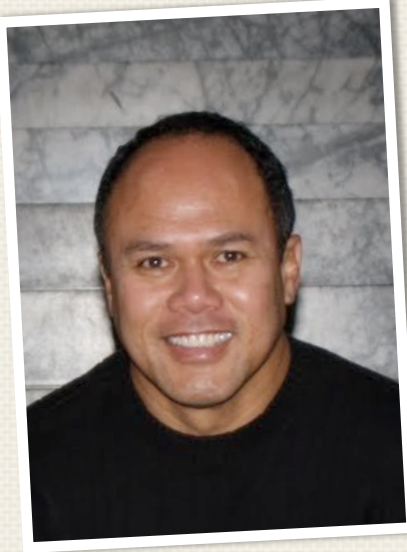
Pam Tau Lee (Asian Pacific Environmental Network) works tirelessly and passionately helping organize low-income Asian and Pacific Islander communities to fight environmental racism. She is a leader in the environmental justice movement and has inspired my work to face the environmental and social justice challenges in our State.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

Representation.

How do you define diversity?

TO ME, DIVERSITY ENRICHES OUR APPROACH AS WE SOCIALIZE AND COLLABORATE. IT'S MORE THAN DIFFERENCES IN CULTURE, IT'S THE WAY WE THINK AND ACT RESPECTFULLY AS WE SERVE ONE ANOTHER.



EDDIE

NAME: EDDIE MAIAVA, JR.

Position: Human Resource Consultant/ Diversity Outreach Coordinator

Agency: Employment Security Department

Years at Agency: 2 1/2 with ESD; 13 years in state government

Ethnic Background: Samoan

Education: BA Music, Instrumental Emphasis, Midwestern State University

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

Being able to provide information, service, and guidance to our diverse communities throughout Washington state and to students in our high schools and higher education institutions as they search for employment and/or transition from their academic environments to a career field.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

Fa'aluaina Pritchard, Executive Director, Asia Pacific Cultural Center in Tacoma. I admire her willingness, persistence and patience in assisting our Asian Pacific Islander communities by encouraging education and collaborative attitude. As I observe her leadership style, I respect the manner in which she kindly and lovingly works with our Asian and Pacific Islander communities in accomplishing common goals.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

Having sufficient and qualified staff in government to assist and support our Asian and Pacific Islanders with government processes. These roles will be critical from explaining how to complete a form to providing assistance in understanding government laws, rules and regulations and dealing with a variety of issues from welfare, employment, education and social services.

How do you define diversity?

I DEFINE DIVERSITY BROADLY, AS MY EXPERIENCE IS THAT THE DIFFERENCES IN EACH INDIVIDUAL CANNOT BE EASILY CAPTURED WITH CATEGORIES SUCH AS SEX, RACE, ETHNICITY, ETC. I ALSO BELIEVE THAT DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE IS A STRENGTH ONLY WHEN THE ORGANIZATION'S CULTURE ENCOURAGES INDIVIDUALS TO OPENLY SHARE THEIR UNIQUE PERSPECTIVES.



SUSANNE

NAME: SUSANNE BEAUCHAINE

Position: Program Supervisor, Equity and Civil Rights Office

Agency: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Years at Agency: 4.5

Ethnic Background: Korean American

Education: MPA, The Evergreen State College; BA, Northwestern

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

My favorite moment is our office's recent publication of guidelines for school districts to implement state nondiscrimination laws. It was an opportunity to see the start-to-finish process of legislation being written, passed and implemented in our state. It was a positive experience to work with a team of talented and passionate colleagues.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

I look up to my brother, Lt. Col. John Melton, U.S. Army Commander of the Health Clinic in Bamberg, Germany. In fulfilling his duties, John consistently has the welfare of his troops and their families in mind. As a veteran and his little sister, I recognize the sacrifices he and his wife make to fulfill the mission and I am proud of his commitment and dedication to our country.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

For me, I believe the challenge is attracting and retaining more AAPIs in the public sector, especially in leadership positions. This can be especially challenging for AAPIs who speak English as a second language, and whose contributions may be overlooked due to an accent.

How do you define diversity?

DIVERSITY REFERS TO A PERSON'S UNIQUE IDENTITY, RESULTING FROM THE SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCES THAT SHAPE ONE'S BELIEFS AND CORE VALUES. ETHNICITY, RACE, GENDER, RELIGION, SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, EDUCATION ARE SOME OF THE INFLUENCES THAT ENRICH A PERSON'S LIFE.



LORRAINE

NAME: LORRAINE LEE

Position: Chief Administrative Law Judge/ Agency Director

Agency: Washington State Office of Administrative Hearings

Years at Agency: 3

Ethnic Background: Chinese-American

Education: Law Degree

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

As an appellate lawyer practicing before the state court of appeals, I won an appeal and obtained a new trial for an African-American client whose trial was infected by racial bias during jury deliberations. Racial bias has no place in the legal system.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

Gordon Hirabayashi for his courage when in 1942 he defied military orders which subjected him and more than 110,000 Japanese-Americans to curfew and internment, for his resilience throughout the legal proceedings that took him before the US Supreme Court in 1943 and, in 1988, when his convictions were set aside by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. He said: "As fine a document as the Constitution is, it is nothing but a scrap of paper if citizens are not willing to defend it."

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

Being creative to find strategic solutions to today's economic crisis and the negative impacts from the elimination of programs and reduced services that government had previously provided.

How do you define diversity?

DIVERSITY IS AN OPENNESS TO RECOGNIZE YOURSELF IN OTHERS, WHO ARE NOT LIKE YOU, WHILE CELEBRATING AND LEARNING FROM THE DIFFERENCES THAT OTHERS POSSESS. I REALLY LIKE THE GERMAN WORD, "MENSCH." IT SIMPLY MEANS, HUMAN BEING, BUT IT ALSO REFERS TO SOMEONE WITH DIGNITY, INTEGRITY AND HONOR. DIVERSITY IS SIMPLY FINDING THE MENSCH IN ALL OF US.



CHEWON

NAME: CHEWON LEE

Position: Strategic Partnership Development Specialist

Agency: Office of the Insurance Commissioner

Years at Agency: 8

Ethnic Background: Korean American

Education: BA Government, Legal Studies, German; University of Washington, Second Year MBA Student in Strategy

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

These are exciting times, as many agencies, including our own, are exploring ways to expand health care coverage to hundreds of thousands of Washingtonians. I've enjoyed communicating such opportunities to consumers across the state. I've also enjoyed building/participating in multicultural coalitions that deliver needed services to Washingtonians in multiple languages. I am grateful that I work for an agency that supports such initiatives and I'm thankful that I have trusted colleagues inside and outside of state government to make such efforts come to fruition.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

Jim Young Kim - the new President of the World Bank. I've been a fan since his day at the WHO. As a doctor, founder of a global nonprofit, college president and leader of an international development finance organization, he has constantly reinvented himself. I have enormous respect for his dynamism and his desire to affect change through poverty and disease alleviation.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

We're lucky to live in a state where many AAPIs have been elected to occupy higher office. Still, there are a limited number of AAPI mentors who have successful cross industry experience and can provide ongoing mentoring for young professionals.

How do you define diversity?

RECOGNIZING THE UNIQUE DIFFERENCES IN INDIVIDUALS, NO MATTER WHAT NATIONAL, CULTURAL, SEXUAL, RELIGIOUS, ETHNIC OR ECONOMIC GROUP, SOCIETY OR INSTITUTION THEY IDENTIFY WITH.



CATHY

NAME: CATHY LIU SCOTT

Position: Community Relations Manager

Agency: Office of the Education Ombudsman

Years at Agency: 2.5

Ethnic Background: Bi-racial, Chinese-American

Education: BA Sociology, Trinity University

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

My favorite moments are when I meet with diverse groups and learn about the people I'm meeting. I love that my job is to find and meet with diverse families and let them know about the services they can access with the Education Ombudsman.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

Frieda Takamura is a role model for me. She is passionate about education in Washington State and she is always open to the diversity in the AAPI community while tenaciously advocating for AAPI's to have decision-making roles in the education system. She has laid a foundation for younger AAPIs to be involved (who otherwise are not) in making things better for the AAPI community.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

To be adequately represented wherever there are stakeholders voicing their opinions. It is up to us to make sure that public institutions reflect the growth of the AAPI population in Washington State.

How do you define diversity?

IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS, DIVERSITY IS HAVING DIFFERENCES THAT BECOME CONGRUOUS FOR THE PURPOSE OF COOPERATION.



MAI

NAME: MAI LY

Position: Civil Rights Investigator

Agency: Human Rights Commission

Years at Agency: 5.75

Ethnic Background: Vietnamese

Education: Seattle University School of Law

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

My work can be challenging sometimes because I have to give bad news to people about an outcome of an investigation. When those same people thank me for the investigation or tell me that they understand what I've explained, it makes me glad that there is this process available to them.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

I don't have any particular AAPI leader in mind. Any time I read news related to an AAPI who has received accolades or recognition for achievement, skill or talent, I am reminded of how much more I can still do.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

AAPIs include such a large swath of people from the Indian subcontinent to Easter Island, Mongolia to New Zealand. I don't think I am knowledgeable enough to identify one challenge that impacts these communities in the same way in today's government.

How do you define diversity?

A COMMON FLOW OF RESPECT AND ACCEPTANCE BETWEEN PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT CULTURES, PERSPECTIVES AND QUALITIES.



MARY

NAME: MARY FERGUSON

Position: Operations Manager

Agency: Department of Commerce, International Trade

Years at Agency: 5

Ethnic Background: Filipino

Education: Ballard High School

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

The moment where I am reminded, or can see first-hand, that our programs do make a difference.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

I can't say that I have singled out a leader that is AAPI.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

Being in the public sector for almost 10 years, I'm not aware of any challenges AAPIs face alone.

How do you define diversity?

I DEFINE DIVERSITY BY THE ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS REGARDLESS OF AGE, ETHNICITY OR GENDER. RECOGNIZING AND APPRECIATING THE VARIETY AND CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAKE INDIVIDUALS UNIQUE.



TRANG

NAME: TRANG PHAM

Position: Charitable Trust Coordinator

Agency: Secretary of State

Years at Agency: 11

Ethnic Background: Vietnamese

Education: High School Graduate

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

My favorite moment in government was when Christine Gregoire was the newly elected Governor. I volunteered to participate in the Governor's Inaugural Ball and had the opportunity to meet and interact with others from various government agencies, including private citizens of Washington.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

The Asian American Pacific Islander leader that I would say I look up to is former Governor Gary Locke. I believe he paved the way for Asian American's in state government. He was the first Chinese-American governor elected in U.S. history. To me that was a defining moment for Asian Americans.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

The most important challenge I feel AAPIs face today is stereotyping and being able to blend in with today's multi-cultural workforce and still maintaining your ethnic background.

How do you define diversity?

TO ME, DIVERSITY JUST MEANS "DIFFERENT." SO, DIVERSITY ENCOMPASSES ALL THE ASPECTS THAT MAKE US DIFFERENT FROM ONE ANOTHER. I BELIEVE IN A BROAD DEFINITION OF DIVERSITY AND NOT ROADBLOCKING ON THE DEFINITION.



SANDRA

NAME: SANDRA KINOSHITA

Position: Organizational Development & Performance Manager

Agency: Department of Revenue

Years at Agency: 7

Ethnic Background: Japanese and Chinese

Education: Master of Social Work, concentration Multi Ethnic Practice

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

I feel tremendous pride every time my agency wins an award. I get to work with very smart, dedicated, and talented people who accomplish remarkable results. There's a great deal of satisfaction to see others recognize and appreciate the people and work at the Department of Revenue.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

There are so many! I have to name two: Tony Ishisaka (retired Dean, School of Social Work, University of Washington-Seattle) is a visionary leader who founded Asian Counseling and Referral Services and went on to mentor generations of social workers. I admire his combination of book and street smarts, down-to-earth style, and steadfast commitment to social justice. Judge Raymond Uno (retired, the first judge of color in the state of Utah) is a tireless leader, mentor, and advocate for all communities of color. I admire his blend of tenacity and grace, insistence to work side-by-side on the front lines, and especially his ability to bring people together even in divisive situations.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

I believe there are glass ceilings unique to AAPIs and there is also a default tendency to lump all of the Asian ethnicities together instead of recognizing the great diversity within the AAPI box. In addition, there is a general underlying challenge specific to government which is an AAPI social stigma associated with being a public servant. Our families like to say, "My son is an attorney," "My aunt is a doctor," and "My father owns a business." Our challenge is to have equal regard for government professions.

How do you define diversity?

DIVERSITY IS NOT ONLY THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE OF AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP, BUT ALSO THEIR BELIEFS AND VALUES, AS WELL AS CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS.



DEAN

NAME: DEAN MOTOYAMA

Position: Program Specialist

Agency: Department of Veterans Affairs

Years at Agency: 3

Ethnic Background: Japanese

Education: MPA, Troy State University; BA Historical and Political Studies, Chaminade University of Honolulu.

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

Whenever I explain what our program does for veterans and getting a positive response for our endeavor.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

It would have to be the current U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki. He embodies the quiet professional who knows his mission and accomplishes it to his best ability without complaint or need for recognition.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

Ensuring balance between your heritage and respecting the heritage of others.

How do you define diversity?

ACCEPTANCE AND RESPECT
FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL'S
DIFFERENCES AND
UNIQUENESS.



HUI

NAME: HUI CHA LE

Position: Program Manager

Agency: Department of Social and Health Services

Years at Agency: 16

Ethnic Background: Korean

Education: Masters Degree in Counseling Psychology

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

Being a proud member of a diverse population and celebrating differences.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

I respect and look up to Victor Chacon, Senior Director for Diversity and Inclusion at the Department of Social and Health Services. He is dedicated to designing and executing inclusive and a discrimination-free department.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

Dismantling the subtle form of institutional racism and discrimination, such as, discriminatory behaviors, policies and practices.

How do you define diversity?

DIVERSITY IS RECOGNIZING AND EMBRACING THE DIFFERENCES THAT MAKE UP THE COMMUNITY.



MICK

NAME: MICK MATSUZAWA

Position: Operation Manger

Agency: Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises

Years at Agency: 1

Ethnic Background: Japanese American

Education: BA University of Washington; MBA University of Tennessee, Knoxville

What is your most favorite moment working in state government?

At the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises, we have the chance to help make a positive difference in people's lives on a daily basis.

Who is an AAPI leader you look up to and why?

Diane Narasaki, Executive Director of Asian Counseling and Referral Service in Seattle, who tirelessly works to help the AAPI community by knitting together the ACRS employees, volunteers and community to navigate the challenges imposed on an underserved community, with hope and opportunity in 30 different languages.

What is the most important challenge AAPIs face in today's government?

Supporting education to nourish the younger generation, by feeding the mind, body and spirit in order create opportunity to live success in a multicultural Washington.

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Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs
210 11th Avenue, Suite 301, P.O. Box 40925, Olympia, Washington 98504-0925

Phone: 360/725-5667 Email: capaa@capaa.wa.gov Web Site: www.capaa.wa.gov